Independence

HARIJAN

12 Pages

Editor: PYARELAL

VOL. X, No. 25 AHMEDABAD — SUNDAY, JULY 28, 1946 TWO ANNAS

QUESTION BOX

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Q. I am a young businessman of 21 years and have 11 dependents. I believe in truth and non-violence but find I cannot strictly follow it in business. What should I do? Abandoning the business means suffering for my relations.

A. This begs the question. It is difficult but not impossible to conduct strictly honest business. The fact is that the honester a business the more successful it is. Hence the proverb coined by businessmen "Honesty is the best policy". What the correspondent lacks is application and an accurate knowledge of honest business methods. What is true is that honesty is incompatible with the amassing of a large fortune. "Verily, verily, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." Nor therefore should an honest businessman, however capable he may be, support idlers whether eleven or more or fewer. The eleven dependents cannot all be infants or incapables. Honesty makes no impossible demands upon the resources of a businessman. An honest man cannot have dishonest kinsmen. The questioner will find on introspection that there is nothing wrong with honest business but that there is something wrong with him. Let him find out what it is that is wrong with him.

Q. Are the time, place and manner of death predestined by the Almighty for each individual? If so, why worry even if we are ill?

A. I do not know whether time, place and the manner of death are predestined. All I do know is that 'not a blade of grass moves but by His will'. This too I know hazily. What is hazy today will be clear tomorrow or the day after by prayerful waiting. Let this however be quite clear. The Almighty is not a person like us. He or It is the greatest living Force or Law in the world. Accordingly He does not act by caprice, nor does that Law admit of any amendment or improvement. His will is fixed and changeless, everything else changes every second. Surely, it does not follow from the doctrine of predestination that we may not 'worry' in the care of ourselves even if we are ill. Indifference to illness is a crime greater than that of falling ill. There is no end to the effort to do better today than yesterday. We have to 'worry' and find out why we are or have become ill. Health, not 'illth', is the law of nature. Let us investigate the law of nature and obey it, if we will not be ill or, if having fallen ill, will be restored.

Panchgani, 18-7-'46

HARIJAN SEVAK SANGH UNDER FIRE

"I am responsible for the policy of conducting Harijan uplift work through the agency of the *savarna* Hindus. They had to do expiation. All of them could not render direct service for lack of necessary qualifications but they could all help with money. That would be one way of doing expiation." In these words Gandhiji expounded the present policy of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, a "society of penitents" as he aptly described it. The meeting itself was remarkable for searching self-examination through a barrage of questions that were posed to and answered by Gandhiji. It was a process of uncensored loud thinking. The questions and answers were as under:

SELF-EXAMINATION

Q. The Communist Party has successfully organized sweepers' unions and helped them to secure their rights through *hartals* etc. But the Harijan Sevak Sangh's activities are confined mostly to welfare work. It cannot therefore successfully compete with the Communists for popularity among the Harijans. Don't you think that in view of this, the Harijan Sevak Sangh ought to alter its policy and method of work?

A. We must be guided in our policy by our sense of right, not by the lure of winning cheap popularity. If the Harijan Sevak Sangh is convinced that it is working on the right line, it will keep on to it, regardless of what others might or might not do. Thus we may organize unions or even induce *hartals*, not from political motives or for such purposes but for bettering the social or economic position of Harijans.

Q. The feeling is gaining ground among the Harijans that the Congress is showing more solicitude for Muslim demands than for the just rights of the Harijans. What have you to say to it?

A. The Congress being a political organization is likely to be more susceptible to political pressure, which the Muslims are in a far stronger position to exert than the Harijans. If it succumbs to that pressure, it will pay the price for it. The Harijan Sevak Sangh, however, being a non-political organization should never put expediency before its primary duty towards the Harijans.

UNTOUCHABILITY AND *SAVARNA* HINDUS

Q. In your recent correspondence with Shri Shyamlal you have said that caste ought to go root and branch if untouchability is to be completely eradicated. Then, why do not you make anti-untouchability work part of a wider crusade against the caste system itself? If you dig out the root, the branches will wither by themselves.

A. It is one thing for me to hold certain views and quite another to make my views acceptable in their entirety to society at large. My mind, I hope, is ever growing, ever moving forward. All may not keep pace with it. I have therefore to exercise utmost patience and be satisfied with hastening slowly. As you must have seen from my preface to a recent Navajivan publication of my writings on *Varna-Vyavastha,* I am wholly in agreement with you in principle. If I live up to 125 years, I do expect to convert the entire Hindu society to my view.

Q. Would you advise the so-called *savarna* Hindus to start, even under the present circumstances, an agitation in selected places for securing elementary civic and social rights for the Harijans? Would you for this purpose advise the Harijan Sevak Sangh to organize Satyagraha against the *savarna* Hindus if necessary?

A. I would not advise the Sangh as an organization to offer Satyagraha against the *savarna* Hindus, but I would certainly not only advise but expect members of the Sangh in their individual capacity to organize such Satyagraha in their respective places. I shall certainly support any such move on their part if it is undertaken in the proper spirit. It is their duty.

STEPPING UP THE TEMPO

Q. Would you, in the absence of popular governments in the provinces, advise the Sangh to carry on a vigorous and energetic programme of temple entry for Harijans?

A. I could. I understand it is being done even at present but at a rather slow pace. I would certainly like its tempo to be stepped up.

Q. Can the members of the Sangh refuse to interdine with the untouchables? Have your views on this question undergone any change?

A. At one time I did say that interdining was not an essential part of the campaign for the removal of untouchability. Personally, I was for it. Today I encourage it. In fact, today I even go further, as a perusal of my recent preface to which I have already referred would show.

Q. Should not the Harijan Sevak Sangh try to secure for the Harijans political power by demanding due representation for them on *gram panchayats,* municipalities and legislatures?

A. Certainly it ought to. No effort can be too great for it.

Q. Should not the Sangh give instructions in the essentials of Hindu religion in the Harijan hostels and in Harijan gatherings of adults?

A. It ought to be the primary duty of the Sangh to give to Harijan children and adults a grounding in the essentials of Hindu religion. If they were brought up in ignorance of these, they would not continue to remain in the Hindu fold, and the responsibility for it would rest on those who had failed to give them the necessary instructions.

Shri Sitaram Shastri of Vinaya Ashram, Guntur, asked whether the Sangh ought not to specially train a body of missionaries to carry on propaganda work among the *savarna* Hindus. He was prepared to start a training centre for that purpose in his Ashram if he were given adequate help.

Gandhiji however had grave doubts as to the practicability of the suggestion. In fact, the question had actually been raised by Shri Ghanashyamadas Birla several years ago and dropped after full discussion. He would be quite satisfied, if at least the members of the Sangh would fully come up to the ideal.

AN ORGANIZATION OF PENITENTS

Gandhiji was next asked: "Ought not we to set up a precedent for having Harijan representatives in the Sangh or at least one Harijan member in the Executive Committee of the Sangh?" In reply he referred to the history of the birth of the Harijan Sevak Sangh at the conclusion of the Poona Pact, which resulted in the modification of the decision of the MacDonald Government, on the question of the representation of the minorities. It was felt that if the rot was to be effectively stopped, Hinduism ought to be completely rid of the curse of untouchability. This called for a real change of heart and repentance for its past sins on the part of Hindu society. It was to that end that the Harijan Sevak Sangh was formed.

"I am therefore opposed to both the propositions," proceeded Gandhiji. "I know that under the present arrangement some Harijans are included in the Board of the Sangh. But this was a concession to Thakkar Bapa's weakness. I have described the Harijan Sevak Sangh as an organization of penitent sinners. Its object is to call upon socalled *savarna* Hindus to do expiation for having harboured untouchability. The inclusion of a Harijan in the Sangh would be mere eye-wash and make-believe, as his would be a mere voice in the wilderness. Before long, he would himself heartily wish to be out of it. I say this from my personal experience of the way in which committees function. I know the Sangh cannot always keep up to the mark. It is of course open to the Sangh to alter its scope and give Harijans a majority in its Executive Committee or appoint a competent body of representative Harijans to act as a board of advisers and supervisors and keep the Sangh on the alert and on the right track."

Gandhiji was next asked to give his opinion on the recent work in the Gwalior State to enlist the services of the Sadhu community in the cause of Harijan uplift. Gandhiji replying said he had grave doubts as to the correctness or advisability of the step. It seemed to him to smack of politics. He would welcome the assistance of true *sadhus,* if it was available. But he confessed, he looked in vain in the country for *sadhus* of his conception. Such *sadhus* as he saw disappointed him. There might be here and there honourable exceptions and their help would be welcome. But he was frankly sceptical of the possibility of utilizing *sadhus* as a body for their work. Even if they tried the experiment, he was afraid they would come to the parting of the ways before long.

Another friend asked whether a portion of the Kasturba Memorial Trust Fund ought not to be earmarked for Harijan sisters. Gandhiji's reply was that they could have the whole of it if they could show the capacity to utilize it. No special earmarking of a part was therefore necessary.

Final Diagnosis and Remedy

The questions and answers finished, Gandhiji addressed a few general remarks to those assembled to give his diagnosis of the relative sluggishness of the Harijan Sevak Sangh's activities and his remedy for the same. "I am responsible for the policy of conducting Harijan uplift work through the agency of the *savarna* Hindus. They had to do expiation. All of them, I argued to myself, could help with money even if they could not, owing to lack of necessary qualifications render direct service. For instance, they might not be able themselves to do teaching work, but they could engage a competent teacher to give education to Harijan children. That would be one way of doing expiation. They would be able to penetrate Harijan society and help in its progress." He knew there were sceptical critics, who questioned whether this kind of work could lead to the eradication of untouchability. He himself was at one time among the doubters. But he had since realized his mistake. He owed a debt of gratitude in this respect to the late Shri Devdhar, at whose activity he had at one time looked askance and which he had even criticized. An year's experience, however, had cured him of his conceit and taught him humility. He realized that if he confined himself exclusively to doing propaganda among the *savarna* Hindus with a view to their conversion, he might have to wait till the Greek Kalends and in the meantime the actual uplift work among the Harijans would remain hopelessly bogged. His own experience had since convinced him that if they could only have sufficient workers with the requisite purity and devotion and spirit of sacrifice to work among Harijans, untouchability would become a thing of the past, even if the *savarna* Hindus were left severely alone. But that would mean that they must first become Harijans at heart and live and labour among the Harijans as Harijans. "But can the members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh truthfully claim to have eradicated the last trace of untouchability from their own hearts? Are their professions altogether on a par with their practice?" he asked.

A member asked as to what his criterion was in that respect. "Are you married?" questioned Gandhiji in return. "I happen to be," replied the puzzled interlocutor. "Then have you an unmarried daughter?" resumed Gandhiji. "If you have, get for her a Harijan bridegroom, not to satisfy her lust but in a purely religious spirit and I shall send you a wire of congratulations at my expense."

"You will now realize," continued Gandhiji, "why the Harijan *sevaks* are unable to move the hearts of the *savarna* Hindus. The reason is that they have not that fire of faith in their hearts, that impatient hunger for service which is the first essential for an effective appeal. Let but a handful of *savarna* Hindus go forth in that true missionary spirit and they will leaven the entire Hindu mass. But not even a whole army of missionaries so called will produce any effect upon them." It needed a Malaviyaji to make such a missionary. He (Gandhiji) could not convert his own sister. And if he could not, argued he, how could he blame others. That would show how hard and thorny was that path. It was however open to them, if they felt that they had the necessary qualification, to try the experiment for themselves in their locality.

The reason for this partial failure, Gandhiji proceeded to explain, was also that the approach of most of the members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh to their mission was not unmixed with political motives. If they really wanted to penetrate the hearts of *savarna* Hindus, they ought to be filled with a purely religious spirit. Mere dialectics was a poor weapon for this kind of work. As it was, they were too much weighed down by inertia, heedlessness and woodenness of mind.

"The other method is more fierce and not altogether free from danger," continued Gandhiji. "It is the method of fasting." He himself had before condemned fasting when it seemed to him to be wrong or morally unjustified. But to shirk a fast when there was a clear moral indication was a dereliction from duty. Such a fast had to be based on unadulterated truth and *ahimsa*.

In passing he hinted at the possibility of his having to go through one more fast in his life, possibly even more than one. He warned them however that he had no present thought of any. It was only a vague premonition.

Panchgani, 20-7-'46 PYARELAL

GANDHIJI'S PRESS STATEMENT

Gandhiji has issued the following statement to the Press:

Doctor A. G. Tendulkar, President Goa Congress Committee is the last one from Goa who has come to me with the latest news from the place. He tells me that there are several parties there, working not necessarily for its inhabitants but for power. Yet at bottom the fight is good. He has produced voluminous papers in support of the statement that confusion reigns supreme in the minds of Goans, correctly described as Gomantakas. This confusion is bad in that, the inhabitants of these Portuguese possessions are novices in the art of real politics. Its separate existence, it is clear, can only depend on the goodwill of the mighty British Government and the impotence of its Indian residents. It is therefore most essential for the success of the movement, that it should be conducted by the Gomantakas on the clearest possible issue i. e. civil liberty. The larger question of Swaraj should await its attainment by the whole of India unless of course the Portuguese Government wisely come to terms with the inhabitants of the settlement through friendly negotiations. It cannot be attained by any direct action of the citizens, whether violent or non-violent. In non-violent action success is assured where every inhabitant is a hero ready to lay down his or her life. It is less to be thought of in Goa than in the more numerous and better seasoned and awakened British India. Therefore the clearest possible issue of civil liberty must be kept steadily in view.

The second condition of success is that the fight must be through non-violent and therefore also entirely open means.

Thirdly there should be no parties struggling for power and position. Where the goal and the means are common, different parties have no meaning.

On reading the literature I find two persons called loyalists who have already made lavish declarations saying that nothing is wrong in Goa and that a false agitation is being carried on by some mischievous persons. Let not the circle of these loyalists grow larger. The best way to avoid this growth is for all parties to become one.

Panchgani, 24-7-'46

HARIJAN

July 28 **1946**

INDEPENDENCE

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Q. You have said in your article in the 'Harijan' of July 15, under the caption 'The Real Danger', that Congressmen in general certainly do not know the kind of Independence they want. Would you kindly give them a broad but comprehensive picture of the Independent India of your own conception?

A. I do not know that I have not, from time to time, given my idea of Indian Independence. Since however, this question is part of a series, it is better to answer it even at the risk of repetition.

Independence of India should mean independence of the whole of India, including what is called India of the States and the other foreign Powers, French and Portugese, who are there, I presume, by British sufferance. Independence must mean that of the people of India, not of those who are today ruling over them. The rulers should depend on the will of those who are under their heels. Thus, they have to be servants of the people, ready to do their will.

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or *panchayat* having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living Force which inheres every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be everwidening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's sewing machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.

Q. Do you believe that the proposed Constituent Assembly could be used for the realization of your picture?

A. The Constituent Assembly has all the possibilities for the realization of my picture. Yet I cannot hope for much, not because the State Paper holds no such possibilities but because the document, being wholly of a voluntary nature, requires the common consent of the many parties to it. These have no common goal. Congressmen themselves are not of one mind even on the contents of Independence. I do not know how many swear by non-violence or the Charkha or, believing in decentralization, regard the village as the nucleus. I know on the contrary that many would have India become a first-class military power and wish for India to have a strong centre and build the whole structure round it. In the medley of these conflicts I know that if India is to be leader in clean action based on clean thought, God will confound the wisdom of these big men and will provide the villages with the power to express themselves as they should.

Q. If the Constituent Assembly fizzles out because of the "danger from within", as you have remarked in the above-mentioned article, would you advise the Congress to accept the alternative of a general country-wide strike and capture of

power, either non-violently or with the use of necessary force? What is your alternative in that eventuality if the above is not approved by you?

A. I must not contemplate darkness before it stares me in the face. And in no case can I be party, irrespective of non-violence, to a universal strike and capture of power. Though, therefore, I do not know what I should do in the case of a breakdown, I know that the actuality will find me ready with an alternative. My sole reliance being on the living Power which we call God, He will put the alternative in my hand when the time has come, not a minute sooner.

Panchgani, 21-7-'46

THE REVOLUTIONARY CHARKHA

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Shri Dhirendra Mazumdar has written a booklet in Hindustani entitled "The Revolutionary Charkha". Though only 40 small pages, it embodies all that pertains to the new scheme. It tells how true Swaraj and true revolution lie hidden in the successful working of the same. But the revolution will remain on paper only, unless the scheme is taken up in earnest and action proves its truth. Hence, it is of great importance to show people how the scheme can be worked to success. Today city-folk are very perturbed because they cannot buy Khadi even though they are prepared to pay handsomely for it. Such a scarcity has happened before, but at that time I was able to console them by assuring them that Khadi would soon be made available, because it was a matter purely of pecuniary adjustment. Today money will not avail, nor can true revolution be brought about by money. It is a difficult task to change the habit of a life time, to banish laziness and to build instead of destroying. It is easy to loot a train and take possession of ten thousand rupees but hard to earn that amount through the sweat of one's brow. It is a common occurrence for persons in the share market to make a lakh of rupees in a single day. But who has even heard of a similar sum being earned in a day by personal labour? A beggar has been known to become rich by drawing a winning ticket in a lottery but no poor man can amass wealth in the twinkling of an eye through the labour of his hands. He will get what is his daily market value, may be eight annas or may be even two.

It is one thing to produce Khadi through the labour of forty crore hands, wholly another to produce mill cloth. True Swaraj cannot come through machines worked by a few thousand hands. But if 20 crores were to produce Khadi through their own understanding labour for personal use and the remainder for sale, then they would surely change the face of India. It is another matter to affirm that 20 out of 40 crores will never take the trouble to produce cloth for their needs. I at least can never own to it.

Panchgani, 18-7-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

A TRAGIC PHENOMENON

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

My post contains so many letters from persons who want to be in the Constituent Assembly that it frightens me into the suspicion that, if these letters are an indication of the general feeling, the intelligentsia is more anxious about personal aggrandizement than about India's Independence. And if I, though I have no connection with the applications of candidates for elections, receive so many letters, how many more must the members of the Working Committee be receiving? These correspondents should know that I take no interest in these elections. I do not attend meetings at which these applications are considered and that I often only know from newspapers who have been elected. It is on rare occasions that my advice is sought as to the choice to be made. But I write this more to draw attention to the disease of which these applications are a sign than to warn my correspondents against building any expectation of my intervention. It is wrong to think communally in such elections, it is wrong to think that anyone is good enough for the Constituent Assembly, it is altogether wrong to think that the election carries any honour with it, it is a post of service if one is fitted for the labours and, lastly, it is wrong to regard the post as one for making a few rupees while the Assembly lasts. The Constituent Assembly should have such members only who know something about constitutions all the world over, above all, about the constitution that India's genius demands. It is debasing to think that true service consists in getting a seat in the Assembly. True service lies outside. The field of service outside is limitless. In the fight for Independence, the Assembly, like the one in course of formation, has a place. Nevertheless it is a very small place and that too if we use it wisely and well; certainly not, if there is a scramble for a seat in it. The scramble warrants the fear that it may become a hunting ground for place-seekers. I am free to confess that a Constituent Assembly is the logical outcome of parliamentary activity. The labours of the late Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru opened my eyes to the fact that the parliamentary programme had a place in the national activity for Independence. I strove hard against it. It is certainly inconsistent with pure non-cooperation. But pure non-cooperation never held the field. What came into being also waned. Had there been universal non-cooperation, of the non-violent type in the Congress ranks, there would have been no parliamentary programme. Non-violent non-cooperation with evil means co-operation with all that is good. Therefore, non-violent non-cooperation with a foreign government necessarily means an indigenous government based on non-violence. Had there been such complete non-cooperation, there would be Swaraj today based on non-violence. But this never happened. In the circumstances it would have been vain to struggle against what the nation had been familiar with and from which it could not be

completely weaned. The parliamentary step having been taken, it would have been improper to boycott the present effort. But that does not, can never mean that there should be indecent competition for filling the seats in it. Let us recognize the limitations.

Panchgani, 18-7-'46

"SCHEDULED CASTES"

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

A copy of a printed leaflet was thrown into my car on 6th July as I was driving to the A. I. C. C. meeting in Bombay. It was again handed to me by Shri Rajbhoj on the 12th instant. It is addressed to the members of the A. I. C. C. I promised to deal with the questions in these pages. I do so now.

The questions are such as not to need an answer from the members. I should not wonder if no member had answered them. They betray gross ignorance of Congress history. It is hardly the province of men gathered together for a particular purpose to deal with extraneous matters. But it is the province of newspapers to dispel ignorance. It is doubly mine, being conductor of a weekly and a Harijan by choice.

Q. What is going to be the place of the Untouchables in your Swaraj? The Congress has talked a lot about protecting the minorities. Why has the Congress failed to produce its blue-print of the plan for protecting the minorities? Is this silence not calculated to create want of confidence in the *bona fides* of the Congress?

A. The place of Untouchables in the Swaraj of my conception will be the same in every respect as that of the so-called caste Hindus. Such is also the position of the Congress. It has talked less and done more for minorities than any other cosmopolitan body known to me. There is no blue-print necessary when work speaks.

Q. Does the Congress regard the Untouchables as a minority? Mr. Gandhi in an article in the Harijan in 1939 admitted that the only real minority in India were the Untouchables. Why did Maulana Azad in his last letter to the Viceroy say that the Congress was not prepared to recognize the Untouchables as a minority?

A. The Congress should not regard the Untouchables as a minority for the simple reason that they are not a minority in the sense in which Parsis, Jews, Christians and others can call themselves minorities. Harijans are a minority, if *Brâhmins*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* are minorities and *Shudras* are a majority. These are not minorities and majorities in the sense we are used to. We have fortunately not come to that pass. When we do, it will be good-bye to any kind of Swaraj. The English may go today, they will some day, but if we become savages cutting one another's throats we will have the freedom that savages have.

The President of the Bombay Provincial Scheduled Castes Federation should have given the quotation referred to by him from the article in the 'Harijan' of 1939. He has not taken the trouble of giving even the number and page of the 'Harijan' in question. I have no recollection of ever having made the statement attributed to me. What the Maulana Saheb is reported to have said was undoubtedly right, irrespective of what I wrote in 1939 or did not write.

Q. What is the significance of the statement that the Congress does not regard the Untouchables as a minority? Does it mean that the Congress will take away even those political safeguards which have been secured by the Untouchables under the present Government of India Act?

A. The significance is that the Untouchables are an integral part of Hindus. They are, therefore, better than minorities and worse if they claim to be and become a distinct community. A few educated Untouchables may keep themselves as a class apart but the mass of them must sink or swim with the Hindus who, if they continue their misbehaviour towards Harijans — the so-called Untouchables, must become extinct as a separate branch of the human family.

What 'political safeguards' the questioner has in view, I do not know. If he refers to 'separate' electorates they must go even to the extent they exist today. They are a device of Satan named Imperialism. It was never meant for the protection of the 'Untouchables'. It was a prop of Imperialism. Every statutory separation has been in furtherance of the policy of 'divide and rule'. It is inherent in the life of Imperialism even if it were to be called by a sweeter name.

Q. Does the Congress admit or does it not admit that the candidates of the Scheduled Castes who have been elected to the Provincial Legislatures came to the bottom in the primary elections and the candidates put up by the Scheduled Castes Federation came to the top? Does the Congress admit or does it not admit that if in the final election the failed candidates were elected, it was entirely due to the Hindu votes? Can the Congress deny that candidates elected by Hindu votes cannot be regarded as the real representatives of the Scheduled Castes?

A. I have not the statistics to verify the statement. My impression is to the contrary except in some cases.

Who were the 'failed' candidates? They could not offer themselves for the joint vote. The first four in the primary elections are the successful candidates, i. e. eligible for the joint vote. Surely it is a thing to be proud of, if the last successful candidate in the primary list won because of the caste Hindu vote at the joint election.

The Congress must deny that the top man at the primary election who failed to secure enough or any caste Hindu votes was the real representative of the Scheduled Castes. Can Sjt. Gaekwad and others like him, so long as they are Hindus, be indifferent to the vote of their fellow Hindus, even though the latter are caste men. They must not cut the branch on which they are sitting. Separation

must mean either change of religion or setting up a new religion — confusion added to confusion.

Q. At the time of the Poona Pact, Mr. Gandhi gave a pledge that the Hindus will not interfere in the selection of the Scheduled Castes to the seats reserved for them. Why did the Congress violate the pledge and commit breach of faith?

A. I gave no such pledge as is imputed to me. The joint vote for the sake of which I fasted was interference, if it can be so called. If any other interference is meant, the questioner must explain and quote my writing in support of the contention.

Q. In the Simla Conference called by Lord Wavell in 1945, the Congress raised no objection to two representatives of the Scheduled Castes being included in the Executive Council. Why did the Congress reduce the representation of the Scheduled Castes this time to one? Does it not prove that the Congress cannot be trusted to keep its word and that as soon as the Congress obtains the right to decide, it will break all its promises and withdraw all the political safeguards secured by the Scheduled Castes?

A. I do not understand this charge at all. The Congress, so far as I know, has committed no breach of faith.

Q. It has been admitted by all the workers of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and also by Mr. Gandhi that the removal of untouchability has made no headway at all. On the contrary, the tyranny and oppression of the Untouchables by the caste Hindus which has been going on for ages, has increased in its rigour and has taken manifold forms. It is necessary to ventilate these grievances on the floor of the legislatures if any redress is to be obtained. No sensible man will deny that this work of ventilating the grievances cannot be done except by the representatives of the Scheduled Castes who are returned through separate electorates. Why does the Congress alone oppose the demand of the Scheduled Castes for separate electorates?

A. I have made no statement, and I do not know that the Harijan Sevak Sangh has, to the effect that the removal of untouchability has made 'no headway at all'. What all of us have admitted is that removal, so far as the caste Hindus are concerned, has made no satisfactory headway. That is not a new complaint. It is of long standing. Woe to the reformer who is easily satisfied with the progress of the reform, on which his mind is set. The reform is two-sided. So far as work among the Harijans is concerned, the Sangh has made fair strides. That in itself is no small contribution to the cause of removal of untouchability. The work among the touchables has gone on at a snail's pace. It is an uphill task. Yet I assert that it is making sure progress, though undoubtedly slow.

The charge that the tyranny and oppression by caste Hindus have "increased and have become intensified in rigour" is wholly wrong and cannot be sustained. What is true, and it is a healthy sign, is that there is a growing consciousness of the wrong among the Harijans, thanks largely to the efforts and the increase in the number of reformers and their impatience of the wrong. But they dare not be satisfied with the results so far achieved. They have to go much farther than they have done. I am sure that will never be through the legislatures or legislation, necessary as both are, though to a very limited extent. As I have said in a previous issue, it is the hoary custom and not law, that is responsible for the mischief. Custom is any day tougher than law. It can be removed only by enlightened public opinion.

Progress will be totally blocked by separation. It is a nightmare which must be given up, unless the goal of separation is extinction of Hindus including the so-called Scheduled Classes. They can only be misrepresented by separate electorates. How can others who are not interested in Scheduled Classes oppose separation?

Q. There is no connection between the religion of a community and its demand for separate electorates. Even communities professing one religion have claimed separate electorates. Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians profess one common religion. Yet all of them have separate electorates. Nobody has raised any objection to their separate electorates, not even the Congress. Why does the Congress oppose the demand of the Scheduled Castes for separate electorates on the ground of common religion which it does not rely upon in other cases?

A. This question can only arise in the minds of those who support separate electorates as good in themselves. Not so the Congress. The parallel of Anglo-Indians, Europeans and Indian Christians is inapplicable and fatal. That separation is a glaring example of the mischief that separate electorates are, as also of Imperialism gone mad. Arrogance cannot go farther. Europeans have been separated as the ruling race, Anglo-Indians being a cross breed have been kept distinct from Indian Christians.

Q. There is no social separation between the Hindus and the Sikhs. In one family one member is a Sikh and the other a Hindu. The Hindus and the Sikhs intermarry and interdine. Yet the Sikhs have separate electorates to which the Congress has never raised any objection. The Untouchables in the matter of social intercourse are far more separated from the Hindus than all the Sikhs and Muslims. If the Sikhs and Muslims can have separate electorates, why not the Untouchables?

A. The Congress would do away today with these separate electorates, if it had the power — not the power that the sword gives but that of persuasion. It is perfectly true that more is common between Hindus and Sikhs than between caste Hindus and Untouchables. That is a blot upon caste Hindus and Hinduism. But the remedy is not to add evil to evil but to reform Hinduism, so that the demand for separation on the part of Untouchables dies a natural death. Meantime Hindus cannot be expected to commit suicide which separation of Harijans from caste Hindus must mean.

Panchgani, 19-7-'46

INSPIRING FOR GRAMASEVAKS

Shri Baldev Chaube, alias Swami Satyanand, renounced a promising career when he non-cooperated from college in 1920 and adopted service of the country as his mission in life. For ten years he served as a member of the late Lala Lajpatrai's Servants of the People Society. Then in 1934, he took a further step and decided to become a *gramasevak*.

Before that, though he was a habitual wearer of Khadi, he had not taken much practical interest in Charkha. The realization that Khadi was the concrete expression of the spirit of *ahimsa* came to him later. His subsequent story makes such fascinating reading that I reproduce it below almost word for word :

"Towards the close of 1934 I decided to take up village work on self-help principle. Accordingly, I set up a 'Harijan Gurukul' in the small village of Dehrighat in the Azamgarh district, U. P. I had to find expenses for my family and the inmates of the Gurukul. In pursuance of the self-help principle, we learnt to build *kutcha* huts, make window frames out of split bamboo and to sink pit latrines. We did our own grinding, cooking and utensil cleaning, span for our clothing requirements, collected leaves for fuel and grew vegetables ourselves on a small plot of ground. We chalked out a programme of teaching village children, Harijan service and other such Congress activity. Special emphasis was laid on prayer and physical labour. By dint of perseverance we soon became experts in the art of building *pucca* walls. Our Gurukul is seven miles from the nearest railway station. During the period under review I had to make thirty-five trips between the station and the Ashram, out of which only two were made with the help of a conveyance, all the rest were made on foot.

"After three years, in 1938, we were able to secure 25 *bighas* of agricultural land, rent free. The same year, owing to floods in the Ghagra river there was widespread distress in the villages around the Ashram. We organized relief through spinning. Before long the numbers of spinners ran into thousands. During the 1942 struggle although we had scrupulously avoided taking part in any violent activity, we came in for our due share of repression. Our huts were burnt down, our assets seized. But Khadi has taken too deep a root. Even while I was under detention some of my companions restarted Khadi work and it has progressed from strength to strength since then.

"On my release from detention, we organized a spinning *yajna* to commemorate the late Kasturba's death anniversary. I believe in the efficacy of such *yajnas*. Beginning from March the 4th 1944, non-stop spinning was started and 25 lakh yards of yarn was spun in 345 days. The *yajna* was performed on the ruins of the demolished or the charred remains of half-burnt Ashram huts and buildings. The result was that new huts and buildings began to rise on the ashes and ruins of the old and the feeling of frustration disappeared among the workers and people at large.

"In the winter of 1935, I was for seven months the superintendent of the Khadi Vidyalaya hostel at Sevagram. That had enabled me to learn the technique of spinning and the allied processes and to become acquainted with the principles of basic education. I have now introduced Khadi work in the Gurukul and made it the medium for Harijan service, rural economic uplift and political education of the people. Harijan youngmen are now gradually coming forward and several of them have become managers and workers in the various departments of the Gurukul. Half the number of our spinners are Mussalman sisters and almost all the weavers. At present we are running a yarn and a Khadi production centre and three Khadi sale depots. We have 20 workers in the Khadi, 5 in the agricultural and 5 in the educational department, thus making a total of 30. Twelve students are receiving training in Khadi work. All the departments are self-sufficient. For the Vidyalaya we are receiving Rs. 35/- per month in aid. Our principal centre is situated 30 or 35 miles from the railway line in the midst of green fields and clustering villages."

In a separate statement Swamiji has given detailed figures of production and the money distributed as wages through the different processes, which shows that from September 1943 to December 1945, 418 maunds of yarn worth Rs. 44,165/ was produced. This was converted into 78,805 sq. yds. of Khadi. The wages distributed on this outturn for weaving, washing, dyeing and calendering came to Rs. 26,891. In the year ending June 1946 the total production of Khadi through the Gurukul will come to Rs. 75,000 worth. The number of spinners working under the Gurukul are 2000. Out of the total Khadi produced, Rs. 20,000 worth of Khadi was consumed by the spinners themselves, the bulk of the rest was more or less locally consumed, only a small proportion being occasionally sent out to the various districts.

As a result of the Government repression during the 1942 struggle, the institution suffered loss in assets and property to the extent of Rs. 27,000 according to the current rates. Nothing daunted the Swamiji on his release obtained a loan of Rs. 6,000 through Babu Shri Prakash to finance the Gurukul's activity. Since then, as a result of the acute cloth shortage, the demand from the people of the surrounding villages for opening new production centres, for spinning and carding instruments and cotton as well as for instruction in spinning and the auxiliary processes has been growing apace. Accordingly, cotton worth Rs. 35,000 was purchased through the Bharat Bank on credit and deposited in the bank's warehouse in addition to Khadi worth Rs. 10,000 as security. The institution has to pay Rs. 250 per month on the mortgage interest. It is clear that a philanthropic activity like Khadi cannot

bear such a load of interest. Under the advice of Babu Purshottamdas Tandon and others, therefore, it has been decided to raise a fund sufficient to make the institution independent of interest-bearing loans. Babu Shri Prakash has agreed to become the treasurer. It would be a shame if a worthy institution like this has to suffer for lack of funds.

On the train to Poona,
29-6-'46 PYARELAL

RICKSHAW PULLERS

To those of us who have lived in the hills, the lightening of the burden of rickshaw pullers, if not the abolition of this form of human labour, should be common cause.

The Labour Investigating Committee of the Government of India recently issued a report which is revealing. The Committee chose Simla, Madras and Calcutta as representative centres respectively of hill stations and the plains of Northern and Southern India for an *ad hoc* survey of the social and economic conditions of these poor labourers.

Simla has a population of the best part of 3000 rickshaw pullers during the season. They are drawn mostly from the hill States surrounding Simla and Kangra though some also come from other adjacent areas of the Punjab.

The task of a rickshaw puller on hill roads with their ups and downs, turns and twists, is difficult and a very strenuous occupation, to put it mildly. 86% of the pullers are between 15 to 30 years of age. Enquiry showed that over 60% had not worked for more than five years, those who had worked for a period of 15 years and more being only 9·71%. My own experience is that the rickshaw pullers who serve in private houses and are well looked after are able to pull for 10 or 12 years but those who ply vehicles for hire are often exhausted after even two or three years. And this period too is only possible because of the seasonal nature of the work. The men are agriculturists but owing to pressure on land, have to migrate in order to supplement their meagre incomes. Some years ago, when a few of us were wondering whether small electric broughams or some mechanical device or a small tramway could not eliminate rickshaws, a deputation came and implored me not to be party to a scheme which would entail loss of valuable income to them, the latter working out at only about Rs. 100 per head in savings in a good season.

79% of the pullers are in debt, over 70% of which is on account of marriage or inherited. The average indebtedness per individual works out at the shocking sum of Rs. 482. This is indeed a sad commentary on our social structure and needs radical treatment. Loans are generally taken from the money lender and the rates of interest vary from 12½ to 37%, again a shocking commentary.

There is no shift system, there being a 24 hour liability of work on the pullers.

Rickshaw pulling puts a very great strain on human nerves, the exertion being particularly great on the legs. Pediculosis is a universal complaint. Teeth and gum troubles are common as also dental caries. 12·5% were found to be suffering from disordered action of the heart while 56·8% of these cases were markedly anaemic. Varicose veins are very common and exposure to rain and snow subjects the pullers in certain seasons to bronchitis and pneumonia which, in their case, are often fatal. The Municipality did at one time have a special medical officer to look after the rickshaw pullers but the post was abolished without cogent reasons some years ago and medical facilities are today inadequate. Some members of the Women's Conference have offered for some years voluntary aid for simple ailments and dressing of wounds etc. to the men twice a week for a couple of hours at a time and this service is most gratefully accepted.

Housing conditions are most unsatisfactory. Sanitary arrangements are poor. Some improvements have been made in certain quarters recently but the whole question needs overhauling and urgent redress. One kitchen for 22 persons and those too without chimneys, 32 men accommodated in a room 60 sq. ft. or eight men in a room 12'×8' are conditions which should not exist in India's so-called summer capital nor indeed, for that matter, anywhere. Adequate clothing and waterproofs should be provided by authority and the fares should be still further raised.

Rickshaws, as a means of conveyance, may be said to be unavoidable in the hills where horse and motor transport is impossible. But what about rickshaws in the plains? These surely should be stopped by law from plying.

In Madras rickshaw pullers are drawn mainly from the depressed classes of adjoining districts. They come because they do not find work in their villages all the year round. Several pullers from the two neighbouring districts of Chingleput and South Arcot alleged that they were compelled to take to rickshaw pulling not only because of lack of employment as agricultural labourers but also because of oppression by caste men and rackrenting by landlords.

The majority of pullers drop out within a period of 10 years. Only 4·4% are literate. Though the majority are married, only about 36% lived with their families in Madras. Immorality is, therefore, rife. 61% are indebted, debt per capita being 112. The cause of debt is again marriages, domestic needs as well as ancestral debts. Pullers have their own moneylenders from amongst their village kinsmen. The method by which the creditors collect the interest as well as the principal due to them is interesting. Only small sums are lent, usually Rs. 10 and interest for one month at one or two annas per rupee is deducted, i. e. at 75 or 150% per annum respectively at the time of paying the principal. Thereafter, the creditor starts collecting the entire principal in small instalments of as. 5 per day, so that a borrower of Rs, 10 repays the debt in 32 days. Daily collections in the *cheris*

where the pullers live are a common sight. Investigation reveals the tragedy of our mass ignorance. In the case of 11% the borrowers did not know the terms on which they had borrowed money and their creditors went on collecting interest for an indefinite period.

No special medical facilities exist for these unfortunate workers and they suffer from all the diseases due to under-nourishment and over-exertion.

Clothing is neither clean nor adequate. Hours of work are not regulated. Alcoholic drink is prevalent. Even women are addicted and children are brought up in this habit from childhood. They aver that rickshaw pulling is impossible without the help of toddy. A quarter of the Tamil puller's monthly earnings goes on drink for himself and family. Telugu pullers are much more moderate, drinking only on Sunday afternoons. They, however, smoke strong country-made cigars. The majority of both smoke *bidis*.

The net monthly earnings of an average puller may stand at Rs. 25 to Rs. 30.

The tenement rooms rented by the Telugu pullers lack ventilation and amenities such as water and lighting. Sanitary arrangements are 'insufficient and stinking'. The following description of one set of dwellings for the pullers is graphic :

> "It consists of 52 small huts each partitioned off from the other only by palmyra matting. Roofing is of old tin sheets and the rooms are very hot during the day especially in the summer. The doorway is so low that one can only enter by squatting. There is only one tap for all these 52 huts containing a total population of 214 persons. The number of flush-out latrines is only two. In the premises of the *cheri* is situated a well from which women draw water and take their bath in the open, there being no bathroom for either men or women. No lighting arrangements exist. The rent is Rs. 2 per hut *per mensem*."

Single pullers are homeless. They sleep on pavements, bathe under public taps, eat their meals from vendors of food in the streets and during rainy nights seek shelter under overbridges or in the open verandahs of some kindly disposed persons or stand shivering and try to keep themselves dry under the hoods of their own rickshaws.

Tamil pullers who have families live in *cheris* because of their low social status and the stigma of untouchability. Their huts are built of thatch. The roofs, in some cases of sheets made from old kerosine oil tins, rest on mud walls of 2 to 4 feet in height. The entrance is so low and narrow that one has to creep on hands and knees to get inside the hut. Cooking is done in one part of the hut. There are no windows or ventilators and hence it is dark and suffocating inside. It is difficult to stand erect as the roofing is so low. The flooring is uneven and very damp, especially in *cheris* situated in low lying areas. Sanitary conditions are deplorable, there being very often no facilities for drainage or conservancy. At the time of enquiry 61 occupants were living in 20 huts, each hut measuring about 50 sq. ft. and fetching a rental of Rs. 1/8 p. m. There are no lighting arrangements. A small narrow drain runs right in the centre of the *cheri*, but it was choked up, emitting a stinking smell. There is only one common latrine for all the 20 families. There is no well or tap and they have to fetch water from the nearest public tap. The vehicles have to be parked in the open space between the rows of huts.

In Calcutta the number of rickshaw pullers was 30,000 in 1944. The majority of these is from some well defined zones of Bihar and U. P. Here too they come mostly from villages in order to supplement the family income from the land. Smoking tobacco is a common habit. The lower castes go in for even *ganja*. As most of them live away from their families, the standard of morality is low and the incidence of venereal disease high. Earnings vary, according to season, from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per day. The work of pulling 6 to 8 hours daily is very strenuous but lucrative from their point of view. Like their brethren elsewhere they are ill-clad and exposed to cold and rain during the winter and rainy seasons. Plying rickshaws barefooted on the intensely heated tar macadamized roads of the city is another hardship. Housing conditions are, as usual, appalling and these unfortunates have little or no protection from the inclemencies of the weather.

Answers to enquiries from Nagpur, Vizagapatam, Murree, Madura and Delhi relate the same tale of woe. Mussooree with our recent experiences there may well join the list.

The writer of the report sums up as follows :

> "Whatever ameliorative measures may be undertaken for improving the condition of pullers, the fundamental fact should not be overlooked that this type of labour is a degradation of human personality. The Commissioner of the Madura Municipality rightly voicing the feelings of all conscientious people has aptly stated in reply to my questionnaire that the ultimate aim should be to abolish this form of conveyance as it is an offence against human dignity. Every word of this statement is pregnant with truth and the general consensus of opinion is that there should be planning in respect of the early abolition of the jin and the cycle rickshaw. If light motor cycle rickshaws could be introduced as part of an organized transport service in all towns, the stigma attached to rickshaw pulling would disappear and the puller of today may be enabled to become the motor-rickshaw driver of tomorrow."

It is good that the Government at long last turned its attention to this evil. The general public is still horribly apathetic. To see young stalwarts being carried uphill by panting pullers or in the plains by cycle-riders is a lamentable sight and shows their degradation just as much as, if not more than, the degradation of the victims whom economic circumstances have compelled to take up such a service.

29-6-'46 A. K.

WEEKLY LETTER

It was glorious weather with passing sunshine and cloud when we arrived here. The air was mild and agreeable and the vista of the surrounding hills with the sleepy silence brooding on their lonely tops and the picturesque fields and villages spread out in the valleys below like a rich plush carpet with curious designs laid out in dark green and gold on it with geometrical precision lured one out of doors. But Gandhiji spoiled it for himself as he kept on thinking of the rice crop which badly needed rains in this part of the year. It has begun to pour since as if in answer to his prayer and a raw blustering wind that penetrates the marrow of one's bones and surly weather keep one imprisoned within doors. But Gandhiji enjoys it and feels happy in anticipation of the golden harvest which will in due season fill the barns of the poor cultivators.

Thanks to the postal strike, there was some welcome relief from the bulging daily mail bag, particularly during the last week. But during the current week there was a steady stream of visitors which again made one time-conscious. There was Louis Fischer, excerpts from whose discussion with Gandhiji will be given later in these columns. Then there were Shri Jaiprakash and party, the Raja Saheb of Aundh and Appa Pant with Shankerrao Deo and others, also Nana Patil, dubbed Robin Hood of these parts, an I. N. A. man who came to persuade Gandhiji "to give them a chance" and a deputation from East Africa where the anti-Indian scandal of South Africa threatens to be repeated. But I must defer treatment of these subjects till next week.

The evening prayer gatherings continue to be held as before in the Parsi Girls' High School hall. The prayer is preceded by the singing of a verse from the Zend Avesta by the girl students of the school followed by a song in Gujarati. These provide the texts to Gandhiji for his after-prayer discourses. Sometimes foreign or Indian news serves as a peg on which to hang the lesson of prayer or to illustrate its meaning or application. Here are a few cullings from these discourses :

"In the song that has been sung today, the devotee says: 'Keep my heart pure—guide me on the path of truth. Give me true happiness which springs from holding on to truth. Destroy the misery which results from relinquishing truth.' Believe me when I tell you after 60 years of personal experience that the only real misfortune is to abandon the path of truth. If you but realize this, your one prayer to God will always be to enable you to put up without flinching with any number of trials and hardships that may fall to your lot in the pursuit of truth."

Here is another: "The verse from the Zend Avesta describes five kinds of physicians, but the fifth is the true physician, who depends on nothing but the name of God for healing. That is just what I have been saying in connection with nature cure. *Ramanama* is the sovereign remedy. It is an agreeable surprise to me to find an authority for it in the *gatha*."

"In the song that has been sung, the poet says that God is hidden and yet present everywhere," he remarked on still another day. "That is true. He knows our innermost thoughts better than we ourselves can do. One who depends on God will never be afraid of anybody, not even of the most despotic government on earth or its officers. For he will have as his protector the King of kings from whose eye nothing is hid."

In his discourse on the 20th he said: "The verse from the *gatha* sung today says: 'Let me remember Thee by making my heart pure by righteous thought, by performing good and wise deeds and by right speech.' Unless all these conditions are fulfilled, one cannot expect to come near God.

"Then the poet says: 'We bow to Thee and thank Thee for all that Thou hast done for us. We will always remain Thy debtors.' What is this debt towards God and how can one repay it? The answer is, by discharging one's duty completely. And since no mortal can completely discharge his duty in life, he must for ever remain a debtor to God."

"Just as a tree has many branches but one root, similarly the various religions are the leaves and branches of the same tree," observed Gandhiji on another occasion. Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism were the main branches but as for varieties of religion, they were as numerous as mankind. If they took the name of God in the prayer gathering and forgot all about it on going out, it was not prayer but blasphemy. Religion had to be lived every moment of one's life.

"The girls have sung," he proceeded, "'With folded hands, O Mazda! I beg of Thee to give me true knowledge and enable me to devote every moment of my life to the service of Thy creation.' It is a great prayer. The devotee begs of God to fill him or her with the thirst for service, so that service will become a pleasure and not a task. But what is the meaning of service? Is killing fellow human beings in war, for instance, also service? No. Therefore the devotee says 'Whatever I do, whether in order to serve others or myself, let all my deeds be pure and noble. Let them fill me with Thy joy.' A man who lives up to this prayer would always be filled with His joy."

Referring to the riots in Ahmedabad he said that the Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad had not yet got over their insanity. Islam meant peace, Hindus claimed to follow the path of *ahimsa*. They both swore by God but in practice they followed Satan. The Muslim stabbed the innocent Hindu and the Hindu stabbed the innocent Muslim. Of the three workers who were killed in Ahmedabad some days ago one was a Muslim. It was a Muslim's dagger that killed him. He was in the company of Hindus. No one even knew that he was a Muslim. One of his companions Vasantrao was well known to and commanded the respect of both Hindus and Muslims. While in jail one of his Muslim companions went

on a fast. There was an overwhelming majority of Hindus amongst the Satyagrahi prisoners. Vasantrao felt that he ought to give his moral support to the Muslim brother and went on a sympathetic fast. His senior companions in jail, tried to dissuade him. "Are you wiser than all of us? You know the Muslim friend's fast is not justified. If it was, we would all have fasted with him." His reply was: "I do not claim to be wise. I prefer to be a fool. I seek your blessings. If this Muslim friend dies in jail in the midst of all of us Hindus, with what face shall I return to my Muslim friends outside? Therefore, I would far rather die with him, whatever the issue of his fast." Neither died in the end, but Vasantrao proved by his action that he was a true Hindu and a true Muslim combined into one."

Gandhiji concluded by exhorting the audience to cultivate that mentality. He was sure that if they prayed to God to restore to sanity the Hindus and Muslims of Ahmedabad, their prayer would not go unheeded, but leap across space and melt the hearts of the deluded rioters in Ahmedabad.

Panchgani, 21-7-'46 PYARELAL

BUTCHERY IN AHMEDABAD

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Butchery has been going on in Ahmedabad for several days. It is difficult to say who is at fault. The policy of the Government is not to let the public know as to who has knifed whom. The Congress Government has adhered to this policy. So we should believe that there is good reason behind this hush hush. It may be that this is on a par with a thief's mother feigning grief over her son's theft. In Ahmedabad everyone must know who is the aggressor or who is more at fault. My job is not to find that out. Mine is comparatively easier work.

The golden path is that one of the parties to the mutual slaughter should desist. Then alone can true peace be established and madness come to an end. In my childhood I and a cousin of mine took *bhang* and like two mad men we went on laughing at each other. When the intoxication was over on the following morning, we were both ashamed of ourselves and could not face each other. The above incident was harmless in comparison. What is taking place in Ahmedabad is frightful.

Is it not enough that three young men have laid down their lives in the attempt to put down the flames? I spoke about it at the prayer meeting at Poona. Several friends have written to me about the three martyrs. If we were wise, these sacrifices would have quenched the fire. But that has not happened. It does not mean that the sacrifices have gone in vain. It only means that many more are necessary to extinguish such flames.

The alternative is that both must exhaust themselves; they must face police bullets. Some may be sent to jail and some mount the gallows before peace is restored. This is the wrong way. Fire put out in this fashion is bound to flare up again. This process does not reduce the poison. It is simply suppressed. It spreads through the whole body and causes more mischief.

Peace restored with the help of the police and its elder brother the military will strengthen the hold of the foreign government and emasculate us still further. Poet Iqbal has written the immortal line:

मज़हब नहीं सिखाता आपसमें बैर रखना।

"Religion does not inculcate mutual strife." Could there be a greater proof of our cowardice than fighting amongst ourselves?

There is a method about everything—even mutual fight. If we must fight, why should we seek the help of the police and the military? The Government should clearly say that the military, whilst it is in India, will only be used for maintaining cleanliness, cultivating unused land and the like. The police will be used to catch *bona fide* thieves. Neither will be used to put down communal riots.

Let Ahmedabad folk be brave enough to eschew the help of the police and the military, let them not be cowards. Rioters are mostly hooligans who do their nefarious deeds in the dark. I am told that most of the stabbings have been in the back. Seldom or never have they been in the chest. Why should one be frightened of such people? One should rather brave death at their hands in the hope that the sacrifice will bring them to sanity. If one has not the requisite courage to face death, one must defend oneself by putting up a fight. The question may be asked as to how one should fight against those who stab you unawares from behind. It may not be possible to prevent such stabbing, but if the onlookers are not in collusion with the evil-doers and are not devoid of courage, they will catch hold of the culprit and hand him over to the police or to the community to which he belongs. Or they can bring him before the people's *panchayat*. Only they may not take the law into their own hands.

Panchgani, 22-7-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

CONTENTS

CONTENTS		PAGE
QUESTION BOX	... M. K. GANDHI	233
HARIJAN SEVAK SANGH UNDER FIRE	... PYARELAL	233
GANDHIJI'S PRESS STATEMENT ...		235
INDEPENDENCE	... M. K. GANDHI	236
THE REVOLUTIONARY CHARKHA	M. K. GANDHI	237
A TRAGIC PHENOMENON	... M. K. GANDHI	237
"SCHEDULED CASTES"	... M. K. GANDHI	238
INSPIRING FOR GRAMASEVAKS	... PYARELAL	240
RICKSHAW PULLERS	... A. K.	241
WEEKLY LETTER	... PYARELAL	243
BUTCHERY IN AHMEDABAD	... M. K. GANDHI	244

Printed and Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai, Navajivan Press, Kalupur, Ahmedabad
Subscription Rates—INLAND: One year, Rs. 6; Six months, Rs. 3; FOREIGN: One year Rs. 8 or 14. sh. or $. 3.